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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: HAITI EARTHQUAKE, OBAMA PRESIDENCY,
AFGHANISTAN, UKRAINE ELECTIONS;BERLIN

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- [1](#)1. Lead Stories Summary

ZDF-TV's early evening newscast heute and ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with reports from Haiti. Print media centered on the Taliban attack on the government quarter in Kabul (FAZ, Frankfurter Rundschau), while Tagesspiegel and die tageszeitung led with the aid efforts for Haiti. Sueddeutsche led with a report on a study indicating that civil servants are better off economically than private sector employees. Editorials focused on the events in Haiti and on a controversial donation to the FDP.

- [1](#)2. Haiti Earthquake

Headlines included: "U.S. takes over Haiti" (Tagesszeitung), "Haiti gives America a free choice" (FT Deutschland), "U.S. leads aid mission in Haiti--American army takes over airport/Secretary Clinton promises longterm support" (Sueddeutsche), "UN speaks of largest catastrophe in its history" (Frankfurter Allgemeine 1/18), "Lootings and violence increase--International community gives more money/former Presidents Clinton and Bush coordinate assistance" (Tagesspiegel).

Under the headline "America is taking over," the Frankfurter Allgemeine (1/18) noted that "it is not quite clear what the U.S.-Haitian agreement includes. It is apparently vaguely defined, unlimited and will basically make Haiti a humanitarian U.S. protectorate for many years to come. Washington's protectorate is obviously causing envy in Paris and among Europeans."

Tagesspiegel opined: "The organization of assistances requires a

great level of professionalism. At Haiti's request, the U.S. government is commanding the humanitarian mission. The U.S. must therefore first get the chaos under control and contain the looting and the violence. This means it must quickly deploy a sufficient number of soldiers. Only then can doctors and supply teams work efficiently. Such logistical priorities sometimes have a bitter consequence: the deployment of troops has priority over the treatment of severely injured people.... The world should be grateful to the U.S. for bearing the responsibility in Haiti. Complaints are out of the question."

In a front-page editorial entitled "Not without America," Frankfurter Allgemeine (1/18) praised U.S. efforts: "This is the political truth: nothing would work without the energetic American mission, despite the selfless engagement of other [countries'] aid workers. Without Washington's long-term engagement, Haiti has no future. Those Haitians who survived will understand that Secretary Clinton's statement is a path out of the misery, not a threat."

Under the headline "Invasion of mercy," Sueddeutsche (1/18) editorialized: "In this catastrophe, the U.S. is showing its best side. Assistance and support for neighbors in need is one of the original American virtues. It is an invasion of mercy with which the U.S. shoulders the crisis in Haiti.... Nobody can currently help more than the superpower. However, many will know afterwards what one could have done better. The good deed of the moment could turn into an evil curse in the long run."

Today's Sueddeutsche editorial added: "The government in Washington did what it is best at: deploy troops, use structures of command,

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and mobilize money. As the inventor of the Marshall Plan, it showed once more that power and mercy do not contradict themselves. As the richest neighbor, the U.S. presents itself as a caring big brother, which will certainly improve Obama's and the whole nation's reputation throughout the world."

13. Obama Presidency -- One Year On

Sueddeutsche Zeitung editorialized: "There is only one thing for Obama now: he must show what America calls leadership and make clear what he wants. Getting the country's finances right must have the highest priority. The great crisis has led to a national deficit of unbelievable dimensions. Without a clear strategy, the U.S. will face a crisis of its national finances, of the dollar -- and of its political leadership role. A Congress that is malfunctioning and navel-gazing will not provide this strategy. Obama must lead."

In a front-page editorial, Tagesspiegel (1/18) wrote: "Those who rise high can fall deep. It was only 12 months ago that America enthusiastically inaugurated its President.... How powerful this has changed can be seen in Massachusetts, where the Senate race is suddenly undecided. For decades, the Senate seat has been in the hands of Democrats.... If the Democrats were defeated there, it would -- symbolically speaking -- hit the country like a bombshell.... Overall, Obama is a better manager than [former President Bill] Clinton and shows a better sense of moderation than [former President George W.] Bush. Assistance to Haiti has been provided remarkably quickly and effectively -- particularly in comparison with Bush's response to Hurricane Katrina. The [averted] plane attack revealed that Obama focused on Yemen and took action a long time ago. He has coped with the financial crisis and is now getting the government's money back from banks. In case he achieves health reform and gets the national debt under control, he will have historic achievements. Obama's loss of reputation has to do with America's difficult approach to its political system and the deeply rooted skepticism towards 'those in Washington.' Many people have an idealized idea of what politicians can do, and are complaining at the same time about the ugliness of the fight between the parties. They are longing for a messiah and have difficulties acknowledging the achievements of the mechanic."

Die Welt opined: "America is stuck in a mist of a depression. One year after the jubilant election of Barack Obama, a formerly hopeful nation is pessimistic about its future.... Germans share this view."

Some are concerned about the American decline, others -- and probably the majority -- are pleased with it without asking what should take America's place. However, both groups share the view that America's decline cannot be stopped. It will come -- one can hear -- as certain as China's rise. But hold on! There is no doubt that America is in a crisis. However, as in 1979, it will come out of its malaise... It is too early to write off America."

14. Afghanistan -- New Ministers, Attack on Government Quarter

Under the headline: "Karzai's Cabinet of Willing Executioners," Berliner Zeitung opined: "The 224 members of the Afghan parliament voted on each of the minister candidates and the Afghans watched the procedure on TV and witnessed democracy in practice. In the first attempt, the parliament rejected the majority of the candidates, Karzai had presented. But those were confirmed who were important for cooperation with the West. Now again 10 candidates were rejected but the most important ones were confirmed. Particularly the aides of war lords and influential tribal politicians helped Karzai manipulate the elections. This is not a real new beginning, and no one hoped this to be. At issue now is only "Afghanization." The West wants to drastically reduce its engagement in the country today rather than tomorrow, and the government must try to find a

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sure footing. One precondition would be that Karzai governs in a way the Afghans support him again. But when looking at the Cabinet that he is patching up right now, then the chances to succeed are only small."

All papers carry extensive reports on the Taliban attack on the government quarter in Kabul. Frankfurter Allgemeine headlined: "For Hours, fighting I the Government Quarter in Kabul," while Sueddeutsche Zeitung sub-titled: "Taliban launch attack on presidential palace and foreign ministry during swearing-in ceremony." Financial Times Deutschland carried a lengthy report under the headline; "Taliban Attack Government in Kabul," and reported: "The well coordinated action of the Islamists shows t how helplessly the Karzai government is acting against the threat emanation from the Taliban. According to Taliban information, only 20 fighters were involved in the offensive. They managed to plunge the capital into chaos within minutes." Under the headline: "Capital As Battle Zone," Tagesspiegel reported: "Only ten days before the International Afghanistan conference in London, the war ridden country experienced a new nightmare. Despite massive security controls 20 to 30 Taliban, among them ten suicide attackers, succeeded in infiltrating the center of the capital which is teeming with soldiers."

Under the headline: "Terror is Nurturing Anger," Sueddeutsche Zeitung opined: "Again the Taliban demonstrated that they, with comparably small expenses, can have a great effect. The Taliban know that they cannot do anything against the superiority of international forces and Afghan security units in Kabul. That is why the attack only reminds everyone that every society can be harassed with the methods of terror. But this attack also shows how little the Afghan Security forces can do against this form of terror. There was no coordination but a lot of confusion among the security forces. There are two possibilities to learn a lesson from the attacks. This attack is either further evidence of leaving Afghanistan and its people to the Taliban or the lesson teaches the world that there was a posh department store 9the symbol of progress) which should now be erected as quickly as possible. But the Taliban seem to be unnerved, too. They are under pressure. The only thing that they can do is to use terrorist attacks. But among the majority of Afghans the anger at the religious warriors is growing."

According to Die Welt, "an attack like this one cannot topple the government. But this was not the purpose of this attack. It is rather evidence that the Karzai government and its protectors are even unable to protect themselves. How should they then be able to protect the ordinary people.... If the insurgents are able to maintain this situation to raise protests and rejection of the voters in Germany and elsewhere, then they will have won. However,

it is odd that the commanders of the Taliban chose the false moment; the main issue in the world is the nameless misery in Haiti, not the next volleys in Afghanistan."

die tageszeitung is of a different opinion and editorialized: "The timing of the attack was well conceived. The Taliban attacked the government quarters on the day of the swearing in of the new ministers and they did so a few days before the beginning of the London conference. The Taliban demonstrated that even in the power center there can be no military security. This means that President Obama's planned increase in forces aiming at defeating the Taliban in a misconception. It should make a surge more difficult and increase pressure for a political solution according to the Taliban's conditions."

15. Ukraine elections

Under the headline "Disappointing," Frankfurter Allgemeine

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editorialized: "The presidential decision in Ukraine has not yet been decided. The lead Victor Yanukovich enjoys over Prime Minister Timoshenko after the first round is not so big that the main player of the Orange Revolution has lost yet. The fact that Yanukovich could run again speaks volumes about the state of Ukraine's democracy.... It is disappointing what President Yushchenko and his former partner Timoshenko have made out of their former success. A seemingly pro-Western policy is not yet a pro-democratic policy. Even if Timoshenko wins on February 7, the promises of 2004 will hardly be met."

Handelsblatt opined: "If Yanukovich wins in the second round, Ukraine will face political paralysis because Timoshenko would remain prime minister. In such a situation, the country would further plunge into economic collapse."

Frankfurter Rundschau's editorial added: "Both contenders are democrats, but they certainly have their weak points. Things will get quieter in the coming years in Ukraine, but an end of the political chaos is not yet in sight."

MURPHY